

1. Who is this Code of Practice for?

- Voluntary and Community Sector Groups
- Public Sector Bodies

2. What is the Gloucestershire Compact?

The Gloucestershire Compact is an agreement between local public sector bodies and the voluntary and community sector to support and improve partnership working between the sectors. It is underpinned by Codes of Practice, based on the national Codes, which cover the following areas:

- Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Organisations
- Community Groups
- Consultation
- Funding and Procurement
- Multi-sector Partnerships
- Volunteering

The Gloucestershire Compact and its Codes contain specific undertakings for each sector, as well as a series of joint undertakings, which aim to make a positive impact on partnership working in the county. In this context, the term “undertaking” commits partners to work towards the principle or action in question.

3. What is the aim of this Code of Practice?

This Code of Practice aims to make a positive impact on the relationship between the public sector and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in Gloucestershire and their commitment to volunteering. It aims to set a framework for:

- Understanding the broad range of volunteering, including organisations that are volunteer-led
- Valuing the role of volunteers
- Raising the profile of volunteering in Gloucestershire
- Encouraging better practice in the management, support and training of volunteers
- Enabling access to volunteering opportunities and actively encouraging a diverse range of people to volunteer

4. What is Volunteering?

Volunteering is a powerful force for change, both for those who volunteer and for the wider community. The following UK national statistics reflect the impact that volunteering can have:

- For every £1 of public funding spent to support volunteering, volunteers give £30 worth of work
- Over 23 million people volunteer each year
- Formal volunteering in the UK is estimated at more than £40 billion per year, or 7.9% of Gross Domestic Product
- Over 20% of adults volunteer at least once a week and 74% regularly help out in their communities on a more informal basis
- More than 75% of voluntary organisations are entirely run by volunteers

(Source: Volunteering England 2005)

The term “volunteering” can describe many activities - there is no statutory definition.

Volunteering embraces a diverse range of activities including formal opportunities through public, private and voluntary organisations as well as informal community participation and campaigning. Volunteering does not replace employment or the work of employees.

Volunteering describes an activity undertaken by any person which aims to benefit individuals, the community or the environment. Such activity may be undertaken individually or as part of a group. It is undertaken freely and is unpaid, although volunteers are entitled to receive reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses.

Volunteering can be about young people coming together to form a Youth Parliament; an older person listening to children reading in school; a group of employees creating a sensory garden for a local hospice.

NB Whilst the Gloucestershire Compact relates specifically to the VCS and public sector, it should be remembered that volunteering also occurs in other contexts, for example the private and business sectors through employee volunteering.

Though not an exhaustive list, volunteering includes:

- Helping to provide a service by volunteering with a voluntary or community organisation, international development organisation, the public sector or a private sector body
- Participating in community activism, campaigning and action that effects social change
- Befriending, mentoring and caring
- Helping to run sports and physical recreation activities
- Being a trustee, board or committee member of a voluntary or community organisation
- Participating in civic governance, for instance serving as a school governor or a parish or town councillor
- Acting as a community representative or being part of a user group
- Participating in a voluntary initiative to improve the quality of life for people in a neighbourhood or community of interest
- Participating in employer-supported community involvement
- Helping develop public policy through involvement in consultation processes and campaigning
- Volunteering overseas

- Volunteering through involvement in a faith congregation or community
- Helping raise funds for an organisation
- Participating in environmental or conservation projects

5. Joint Undertakings

All partners to the Gloucestershire Compact are committed to working together to continually improve the effectiveness of the relationship between the public sector and the VCS, and undertake to:

- 5.1 Work together to develop a modern and dynamic infrastructure¹ in Gloucestershire to support volunteering, recognising that this is essential for the success of volunteering work across the county.

Increasing the Choice and Diversity of Volunteering Opportunities

- 5.2 Increase access to volunteering by challenging the real or perceived barriers, which prevent people from volunteering.
- 5.3 Encourage volunteering by individuals from currently under-represented sectors.
- 5.4 Improve the opportunities for volunteering, ensuring a broad range of possibilities.
- 5.5 Support volunteers who have additional needs.

Ensuring Mutual Benefit of Volunteering

- 5.6 Show commitment to volunteers and volunteering at every level through their organisation or agency, for example including information about employer-supported volunteering in induction packs for new staff.
- 5.7 Recognise that managing volunteers effectively needs resources, and ensure that there is appropriate financial provision for volunteer management in funding programmes and applications.
- 5.8 Seek to ensure that all relevant proposed policies and procedures are checked for impact on volunteers and volunteering before being adopted.
- 5.9 Encourage organisations who work with volunteers to involve volunteers in decision-making and information flows, so that volunteers are acknowledged and valued as important partners and stakeholders in the organisation.
- 5.10 Ensure that volunteers are not out-of-pocket because of their voluntary activity.
- 5.11 Ensure that volunteering opportunities complement rather than replace the role of paid staff.
- 5.12 Recognise and budget for vetting procedures appropriate to the role and involvement of the volunteer.

¹ Volunteering infrastructure comprises the support and advice services available to both volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations. These services aim to raise the profile of volunteering and promote and encourage the effective use of volunteers according to good practice principles.

One of the main sources of volunteering infrastructure support within Gloucestershire is the Volunteer Centres, which provide best practice advice and provide a link between individuals wanting to volunteer and organisations wishing to recruit. Some Volunteer Centres are integrated with Councils for Voluntary Services (CVS).

Recognition of the real cost of Volunteering

- 5.13 Accept that although volunteering is given freely, it is not cost free.
- 5.14 Work together to expand the public perception of volunteering by improving the profile, status and range of volunteer activity.
- 5.15 Support initiatives to widen the profile of volunteering.
- 5.16 Aim for greater publicity for the achievements of volunteers.

Providing Support for Volunteers

- 5.17 Provide volunteers with the induction, support, management, training and other resources that they need to work effectively.
- 5.18 Identify a named person within each agency or organisation (eg a senior manager or a Trustee) to be responsible for volunteer involvement.

6. Public Sector Partner Undertakings

The Gloucestershire Compact public sector partners undertake to:

- 6.1 Respect the independence of the VCS.
- 6.2 Adopt policies to ensure that specialist volunteering infrastructure can develop realistic sustainable long term funding.
- 6.3 Recognise that the VCS needs support and resources to actively encourage a diverse range of people to volunteer.
- 6.4 Recognise volunteer time when assessing the added value that is represented within a funding bid.
- 6.5 Aim to increase staff awareness of the contributions made by volunteers to public sector objectives.
- 6.6 Recognise that many organisations are run solely by volunteers, and therefore consider the time implications for the VCS of any consultations that are being carried out.

7. Voluntary and Community Sector Undertakings

The Gloucestershire Compact voluntary and community sector partners undertake to:

- 7.1 Seek to widen opportunities for volunteering and develop systems for working co-operatively with other organisations.
- 7.2 Work to develop a diverse volunteer base, by working with representatives and organisations that understand the needs of particular groups of people who have difficulty in accessing volunteering.
- 7.3 Ensure that volunteers, as well as staff, know how volunteering has enhanced and benefited the organisation or group.
- 7.4 Ensure that adequate resources for volunteer management, training and expenses are included in funding bids.

8. Fundamental Principles of Volunteering

There are five principles fundamental to volunteering:-

- Choice
- Diversity
- Mutual Benefit
- Recognition
- Support

Choice

Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. Any encouragement to become involved in volunteering should not result in any form of coercion or compulsion. Freedom to volunteer implies freedom not to become involved.

Diversity

Volunteering should be open to all, whatever their age, disability, gender, race, religion or sexual orientation. Implementing equalities policies and schemes and a welcoming approach are basic to supporting diversity.

Mutual Benefit

Volunteers offer their contribution unwaged but should benefit in other ways in return for their contribution to the community. Giving voluntary time and skills must be recognised as establishing a reciprocal relationship in which the volunteer also receives. Benefits that volunteers can expect to gain include a sense of worthwhile achievement, useful skills, career enhancement and enrichment, personal and social development, experience and contacts, sociability and fun and inclusion in the life of an organisation.

Recognition

Explicit recognition of the value of what volunteers contribute to the organisation, to the community, to the social economy and to wider social objectives, is fundamental to a fair relationship between volunteers, organisation and government policy and practice.

Support

Good support, management and training of volunteers are an essential part of volunteering. For volunteers to have a worthwhile experience and to feel valued, as well as being able to contribute to an organisation's objectives, they must be well supported.

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Partnership & Participation Project*

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Further information about the Compact be found on the Gloucestershire

Voluntary and Community Sector website www.gloshub.org.uk

This document can also be made available in different formats or languages by request. Please contact us at the above address for more information.